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Abstract

While many legislative scholars have consistently concerned themselves with the motivations behind congressional votes, very little has been done to examine the specific motivations behind votes on veterans' legislation. By using the congressional ratings compiled by veterans' interest groups as well as a variety of variables that may affect those ratings, this paper seeks to gain a deeper understanding of what factors contribute to the successes of individual veterans' organizations. It is concluded that, while some constituency characteristics did play a small role in explaining legislative successes, the majority of success is explained by both legislator party affiliation and ideology.

EXAMINING VETERANS' INTEREST GROUPS: UNDERSTANDING SUCCESS THROUGH INTEREST GROUP RATINGS

Nicole E. Schiller

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While many legislative scholars have consistently concerned themselves with the motivations behind congressional votes, very little has been done to examine the specific motivations behind votes on veterans' legislation. By using the congressional ratings compiled by veterans' interest groups as well as a variety of variables that may affect those ratings, this paper seeks to gain a deeper understanding of what factors contribute to the successes of individual veterans' organizations. It is concluded that, while some constituency characteristics did play a small role in explaining legislative successes, the majority of success is explained by both legislator party affiliation and ideology.

Introduction

The passage of the 1944 *Servicemen's Readjustment Act* (G.I. Bill of Rights) was a landmark moment in American history. In addition to providing American service people with a generous package of benefits, the bill also revealed the full power of the American veterans' lobby. While a variety of actors certainly played key roles in the drafting and passage of the legislation, veterans' interest organizations emerged as a powerful pressure force capable of influencing the public, the media, and elected officials. The success of the G.I. Bill of Rights, combined with several smaller legislative victories, has earned veterans' organizations a respected position, both in American history and within halls of the Veterans' Administration (Keller 1629). Perhaps this is why the relative lack of research into those factors that influence the success of veterans' organizations is so startling.

The Veterans' Lobby

In order to examine the factors that may contribute to the legislative successes of the American veterans' lobby, one must first look towards the differences within the lobby itself. Often assumed to be a single unified force, the 45 chartered veterans' interest organizations that vie for the votes of U.S. congressmen are in fact quite diverse in both their motivations and their desires. This diversity often contributes to different legislative agendas and significantly varying legislative ratings across groups. The five groups examined within this paper were chosen to represent the varying perspectives, backgrounds, and resources within the veterans' lobby. Understanding these organizations provides one with the necessary tools to begin investigating their relative influences and those factors that might make them more or less successful.

The largest and traditionally most powerful of the veterans' organizations is the American Legion (AL), which was formed in 1919 by veterans of the First World War (Bennett 46). Today the Legion is generally acknowledged as being America's "most important veterans group" (Stavisky 130) as well as the group best equipped to lobby legislators. Throughout the years, the Legion has made use of several unique and powerful lobbying strategies that have greatly contributed to their success relative to other organizations. Examples of these include the presence of Legion Posts in most American congressional districts, as well as assigning a Legionnaire to work with each member of the House of Representatives. Traditionally, Legion membership is "conservative and sincerely concerned [...] and national security" (Stavisky 131). Also, because of the organization's size, it can sometimes be slow to act, even when concerned with issues of great importance (Keller 1629).

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) was formed following World War I in an effort to offer "special programs" to those veterans who were injured or sickened during their service (Stavisky 132). While the group maintains strong ties with the American Legion, it differs from the Legion in several ways. Unlike the Legion, DAV has been hesitant to lobby on issues not directly pertaining to veterans (Keller 1629), but rather chosen to remain somewhat a-political in its intentions. The DAV walks a fine line; for it aligns itself with both the larger, wealthier, and conservative American Legion as well as those Vietnam Veterans who tend to lay to the left. This is possible because the organization so rarely chooses to make a political statement; but instead lobbies almost exclusively for issues concerning disabled veterans.

Those organizations formed later in the nation's timeline remain distinct from the Legion and DAV. With the G.I. Bill of Rights already in place, and thus some level of veteran's assistance assured, these groups have been free to form around rather specific issues and military conflicts. Chief among these organizations is American Veterans (AmVets). Generally regarded

as a “second tier” organization, AmVets was formed by veterans whose primary goal was to provide an alternative to the powerful American Legion (Stavisky 133). With little in the way of “wealth, experience, [and] clubhouses,” AmVets attracted young WWII G.I.’s with opportunities for immediate leadership positions (Stavisky 133). Also, much like the DAV, AmVets has been careful to remain a-political. When the group does speak out on an issue not immediately effecting veterans, it generally focuses on such bipartisan platitudes as patriotism, charity, and increased civic mindedness (Stavisky 133).

The Retired Enlisted Association (RE) was created in 1963 and works for the expressed purpose of “[enhancing] the quality of life for uniformed services enlisted personnel, their families and survivors-including active components, Reserves, and National Guard, and all retirees” (Retired Enlisted Association). With less wealth and membership than all previously mentioned groups, the Retired Enlisted Association very rarely takes a stand on issues that are not directly related to the interests of former enlisted service people.

Often considered the “outsider” among veterans interest organization, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) have been the most vocal in criticizing the American Legion’s seemingly firm hold on the Veterans’ Administration (VA). Unlike all of the above mentioned groups, the Vietnam Veterans of America’s roots lie firmly in the “anti-war [and] pro-amnesty movements” (Keller 1629). The group was founded in 1978, when those veterans returning from the Vietnam War found that traditional veteran’s organizations did not meet their needs (Keller 1629). Differing greatly from those traditional groups, the Vietnam Veterans of America has focused its efforts on “unemployment, psychological readjustment difficulties, and exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange” (Keller 1629).

The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association (IAVA) is America’s youngest veterans’ interest group. Founded in 2004 by an Army First Lieutenant who served during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the organization’s primary goal has been securing benefits for both veterans and active duty soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan (“About IAVA Action”) While the group does lobby for political support, it also works to empower veterans within their communities by encouraging them to share stories regarding their experiences serving.

Previous Research

The relatively small body of work regarding the factors that effect votes on veterans’ issues began with the benchmark study conducted by V.O. Key in 1943. By comparing ratios of reelection, Key attempted to examine whether or not a Representative’s support for American Legion measures translated into electoral success or failure (28). Key found that while “Friends of the Legion” generally tended to fair better when running for reelection, party seemed to play a far greater role in a Representative’s success than Legion support (33). He also found that Republican Representatives from the Middle Atlantic States and Democratic representatives from the East South Central and West South Central seemed to “be able to ignore Legion lobbyists without endangering their political careers”(35). While Key’s study focused only on the American Legion, and was conducted quite some time ago, it contributed a great deal to what is now assumed to be true about veterans’ interest groups.

Competing Theories

Subsequent research in this area has dealt not with veterans’ interest groups, but with the motivations of legislators’ votes. Downs, Buchanan and Tullok, and Olson approached this issue by applying the economic theory of “rational self-interested behavior” to the “political sphere”

(Kau, Keenan and Rubin 231; Downs; Buchanan and Tullock; Olson). According to this model, Representatives cast votes based primarily on delivering benefits to, or fulfilling the desires of, their constituency. More recently George Stigler conducted an analysis of government regulation and found that those legislators who best respond to the interests of their constituency are rewarded on Election Day (11). In his 1974 piece evaluating various arguments surrounding political decisions, Richard Posner asserts that the success of the economic theory in areas outside of politics does much to support its feasible application to politics (356).

More recent literature has pointed towards a dramatically different explanation for voting behavior. In 1990, Mark Zupan and Joseph Kalt examined whether personal ideology or constituent concerns play a greater role in a Representative's voting decisions. The two explain that if ideology is indeed the main motivator in the decision making process, political scientists will have to more heavily concern themselves with "hard-to-specify and hard-to-quantify matters such as culture, intellectual ideas and trends..." (104). Indeed, it was their conclusion that legislators tend to indeed vote primarily based on their own convictions as opposed to acting solely as representatives of a given district's interests (128). This argument is echoed by the work of Douglas Nelson and Eugene Silberberg who, by examining the Senate, found that party affiliation, ideology, and vote-trading play significant roles in the decision making process (21,23). Bernstein and Horn reached a similar conclusion in their 1981 study of the reasons for votes on environmental policy (236). After considering various theories regarding voting habits, the two concluded that legislator ideology and party affiliations have the most significant affect on votes (236, 245).

Data and Model

In order to examine the factors that contribute to the legislative successes of veterans' interest organizations, and address the competing theories offered above, I present a model that measures the effects of both constituent and Representative characteristics on House votes. As a dependent variable, I will be using the congressional ratings assigned to House legislators by the above mentioned veterans' interest organizations. These ratings reflect the extent to which a representative voted with a particular veterans' organization on issues concerning that organization, and thus serve as an indicator of a group's success. The independent variables are listed below.

District ideology. This will be measured by using the percentage of each district that voted for George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election. Because the American Legion has traditionally been a staunch conservative group, I expect district ideology to contribute greatly to its legislative ratings. I expect the same phenomenon to be true of the traditionally liberal Vietnam Veterans of America. District ideology is expected to play no role in the ratings of the nonpartisan AmVets.

The percentage of veterans in the district. Whether or not a significant veteran population exists in a district is predicted to greatly affect a Representative's vote on issues concerning veterans. This is expected to hold true for all of the interest groups tested.

The region of the district. Because of the national nature of those veterans' groups used, I do not expect region to play a role in the influence exhibited by said veterans' groups.

Defense employment within the district. This variable will account for whether or not a substantial portion of a given districts' employment comes from the defense sector, as determined by *Congressional Quarterly's: Politics in America*. Traditionally, the American Legion and our nation's defense contractors have lobbied for some of the same things. For this reason, I predict that the presence of a sizable defense plant within a district will improve the Legion's ability to a push through its legislation.

The presence of a military base within the district. It seems intuitive that the presence of a military base within a district might motivate a Representative to vote for legislation that would benefit those employed by that base. For this reason, I expect military bases to contribute to high interest group ratings. This should prove especially true for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans' Association as that organization is associated with the nation's most recent military conflict, and those employed or residing at a base are likely to also be associated with that conflict.

The party of the Representative. As previously stated, the American Legion has traditionally aligned itself with conservative Representatives. Thus, I expect Republican Representatives to demonstrate higher scores from this group than Democrats. Likewise, I expect Democrats to demonstrate higher scores from the Vietnam Veterans of American than Republicans. Again, I expect AmVets to remain unaffected, as the group is largely non-partisan.

The veteran status of the Representative. I predict that those legislators who have themselves served in the military will be naturally more likely to support veteran's legislation.

The number of terms served by the Representative. The number of terms a Representative has served is expected to increase that Representative's support for the American Legion. This is because of the Legion strategy of assigning a Legionnaire to each member of Congress. The more time one serves in office, the more likely they are to have fostered a relationship with that legionnaire.

The Ideology of the Representative. This will be measured by using legislative ratings calculated by the American Conservative Union (ACU). Because the American Legion is a traditionally conservative group, I expect legislators with higher ACU scores to also have higher ratings from these groups. Because the Vietnam Veterans Association is traditionally liberal, I expect high ACU scores to contribute to lower ratings from this group. I expect this measure to prove insignificant for the AmVets in light of their dedication to non-partisanship.

As there is a high potential for a Representative's party and ideology to interact with one another, three regressions will be run for each of the abovementioned veterans' interest groups. The first regression will include ideology, the second will include party, and the third will include both. Through these tests, I hope to discover which of the independent variables most contributes to the successes of these different organizations.

Results and Analysis

As previously noted, three tests were done for each of the five interest organizations. The first of these tests examined the affect that the independent variables, excluding ideology, made on the scores of the different groups. As is reflected in Table 1, the highest R^2 is 78.9 for the Disabled American Veterans. This would imply that the independent variables used were able to explain almost 80% of the variance in DAV success. Party seemed to play the largest role in this with a beta of .72. The variable was significant at the .001 level. This implies that a Democratic Representative is more likely to contribute to a high DAV score than a Republican one. District ideology also contributed a great deal with a beta of -.23. Here we also see significance at the .001 level. Because district ideology was measured in the percent per district that voted for George W. Bush in the 2004 Presidential Election, we can infer that a more liberal district is more likely to contribute to a high DAV score than a conservative one. The percent of the district that is former or current military also proved statistically significant. The American Legion, the oldest and most widely recognized veterans' interest group, displayed the lowest R^2 with 8.1% of the variance explained by the included independent variables. Party had the largest beta weight (.199) and was significant at the .001 level. Similar to those results yielded by the DAV, this implies that a Democratic Representative would be more likely to contribute to an American Legion success than a Republican one. Indeed, for four out of the five groups, party proved to be both significant and the major factor in explaining legislative success. Also worth noting, of those four in which party was significant, all expressed that a Democratic Representative did more to explain legislative successes than a Republican one.

TABLE 1 * = .05 level ** = .01 *** = .001						
Variable	RE	DAV	IAVA	AL	VVA	AMVET
Party	.52***	.72***	.62***	.199***	.197*	-.148
Terms	-.144*	0.017	0.04	-0.05	-.062	-.555
District ideology	0.01	-.23***	-.049	0.157	0.109	-.049
Military population	.144**	0.005	0.024	0.068	0.047	0.051
Veteran status	0.009	0.003	0.008	0.009	0.009	-.028
Defense industry	0.043	0.027	-0.065	-0.003	0.018	-.602
Presence of base	0.34*	0.046	0.06	0.03	0.039	0.007
New England	.121*	0.034	0.056	0.098	0.043	0.128
Mid Atlantic	0.099	0.018	0.144**	0.196**	0.016	0.042
East North Central	0.045	0.13	.131*	0.151	0.083	
West North Central	0.082	0.022	.102*	.151*	0.098	0.106
South Atlantic	0.077	0.03	0.065	.180*	0.004	-.048
East South Central	0.136*	-.02*	.125*	0.131	0.03	0.004
West South Central	.138*	.086***	0.01	0.054	0.03	-.004
Mountain	0.03		0.06	.15*	0.045	0.054
Pacific	-.222*					-.19*
R ²	30	78.9	42.5	8.1	8.7	10

Region also contributed to Legion scores, with four of the nine region categories showing some level of significance. The greatest of these is the Mid Atlantic with a beta of .196 and significance at the .01 level. The South Atlantic, Pacific, and West North Central variables showed significance at the .05 level.

Of the remaining groups one can note that The Retired Enlisted Association (RE) was the only group in which the number of terms served by a Representative or the military population of the district showed any significance. With a beta of $-.144$ at the $.05$ level, we see that for the RE, the number of terms a Representative serves seems to lessen that Representative's support for RE measures. With a beta of $.144$ and significance at the $.01$ level, it seems that the higher a military population, the greater the likelihood of a Representative supporting an RE measure.

Table 2 shows regression results for the second version of the test. As previously stated, this series of regressions includes the ideology variable, and excludes the party variable. Once again, DAV has the highest R^2 , although it is down 9 points from the previous figure. Most of the affect on DAV scores seemed to come from ideology, with a beta weight of $-.711$ at the $.001$ level. Because ideology was measured using ratings provided by the American Conservative Union, we are able to infer that the more conservative a Representative is, the less of a positive contribution that Representative makes to a high DAV score. Remaining consistent with Table 1, district ideology also proved significant at the $.001$ level. Its beta decreased only slightly, once again implying that the more conservative a district the less likely it is that the district's Representative will contribute to high DAV scores.

TABLE 2 * = .05 level ** = .01 *** .001						
Variable	RE	DAV	IAVA	AL	VVA	AMVET
Ideology	-.464***	-.711***	-.59***	-.151	-.17**	-.005
Terms	-.117*	.009	.031*	-.056	-.153	.108
District ideology	-.50	-.204***	-.056	.114	-.153	.108
Military population	.181***	0.058	0.073	.1	-.098	.052
Veteran status	-.021	-.041	-.02	.001	-.10	.009
Defense industry	0.044	-.005	0.064	-.02	-.063	-.052
Presence of base	.074	.009	.007	-.039	0.022	-.009
New England	.108*	.028	.037	.04	-.004	.11
Mid Atlantic	.078	.004	.155*	.152*	-.058	.206
East North Central	.035	.13	.127*			.097
West North Central	.099	.049	.121*	-.079	-.042	.107
South Atlantic	.108	.072*	.108	.073	-.070	
East South Central	.176	.037	.173	.125	-.033	.063
West South Central	.169	.130***	.115*	.188	-.058	.022
Mountain	0.048	0.051	0.072	0.064	0.025	0.046
Pacific				-.068	-.032	-.16
R ²	23	70	36	6.3	10	10

The R^2 for the American Legion fell slightly upon the replacement of the party variable with the ideology variable. Surprisingly, ideology proves to be insignificant for the American Legion. With the introduction of the ideology variable, the only variable that is able to remain significant for the American Legion is the Mid Atlantic one, which was significant only at the $.05$ level. From this one can imply that a legislator's party plays a far greater role in their support for Legion measures than their individual ideology.

The Vietnam Veterans of America was the only group whose R^2 increased with the addition of the ideology variable. For this group, ideology was the only significant factor. It had

a beta weight of $-.17$ and was significant at the $.01$ level. One will note that the R_2 for the American Veterans remained the same despite the addition of the new variable, and neither ideology nor party proved significant.

Table 3 shows the results from the series of regressions that included both the party and ideology variables. One will notice that, once again, the Disabled American Veterans R_2 is significantly higher than all of the others, explaining 80% of the variance in the group's ratings. Both party and ideology are significant at the $.001$ level with party having a beta weight of $.53$ and ideology having one of $-.347$. We also see that district ideology remains significant even though it decreased significantly when both party and ideology are considered.

Party and ideology once again remain insignificant for the American Veterans; however through the combination of the two the number of regional variables increase in significance. These regional variables, however, are only significant at the $.05$ level.

The R_2 for all remaining groups increases when these two variables work together. For the American Legion and Vietnam Veterans Association this increase is only slight and neither party nor ideology proves significant, however the R_2 for the Retired Enlisted Association and the Iraq and Afghanistan Association of Veterans increase dramatically

TABLE 3 * = .05 level ** = .01 *** .001						
Variable	RE	DAV	IAVA	AL	VVA	AMVET
Party	0.45	.53***	.50***	0.092	0	0
Ideology	-0.144	-.347***		-0.089	-0.167	-0.074
Terms	.144*	0.02	0.032	-0.075	-0.058	0.014
District ideology	0.046	-.121**	0.044	0.114	-0.157	-0.108
Military population	.143**	0.016	0.03	0.104	0.103	0.109
Veteran status	-0.009	-0.029	-0.005	0.01	-0.008	0.054
Defense industry	0.041	0	0.068	-0.24	0.062	0.006
Presence of base	.098*	0.025	0.042	-0.337	-0.021	0.052
New England	.133*	-0.022	0.042	0.072	0.015	.17*
Mid Atlantic	0.087	0.005	.130**	.162*	-0.052	.209*
East North Central	0.049	0.023	.142**	0.06	0.03	.232*
West North Central	0.086	0.04	.106*	0.119	0.062	.197*
South Atlantic	0.091	.062*	0.083	0.125	-0.042	0.137
East South Central	.141**	-0.001	.134**	.172*	-0.01	.164*
West South Central	.147*	.11**	0.008	0.061	-0.034	0.137
Mountain	0.04	0.036	0.063	0.099	-0.005	0.137
Pacific			-0.231			
R2	30.5	80	43.9	7.2	10.3	8.6

One should pay special attention to those variables that remain significant across the three tables. For the Disabled American Veterans district ideology remains significant, slipping from the $.001$ level to the $.01$ level only when both the party and ideology variables are both included. For both DAV and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association, the significance of

party and ideology does not seem to waver as much as either is excluded or included. We also see that for the Iraq and Afghanistan Association the Mid Atlantic, East North Central, and West North Central regions remain significant. For the Retired Enlisted Association, terms, New England, and the percent population serving or having served in the military also retains its significance.

Discussion

From this analysis, we see that many of the hypotheses originally posed were disproved. District ideology, while it did prove to be significant in some instances, did not do so in the cases of the American Legion or the Vietnam Veterans of America, the two groups that were predicted to see the most affect from this variable. While both were consistent in following a trend, with the American Legion favoring more conservative districts and the Vietnam Veterans favoring more liberal ones, these indicators are rather small and do little to confirm the original hypothesis. The hypothesis regarding the nonpartisan nature of AmVets proved itself true as district ideology remained insignificant.

Both Representative ideology and party disproved the original hypothesis surrounding the American Legion. Generally considered the most conservative of veterans' groups, it was predicted that both conservative ideology as well as affiliation with the Republican Party would contribute greatly to higher Legion scores. This hypothesis however, proved to differ greatly from findings that revealed party and ideology having little affect on Legion ratings. In addition, in the one instance of significance, we saw that a Democratic Representative seemed to more heavily account for the Legion's legislative successes. AmVets once again remained nonpartisan in that neither party nor ideology had a significant effect on scores

The percentage of veterans within the district was also expected to be significant for each group, as a veteran constituency might make a representative more sympathetic towards veteran measures. This variable proved to be significant only for the Retired Enlisted Association, indicating that perhaps either constituent concerns do not necessarily translate into votes or veterans have remained relatively quiet in demanding votes from their Representatives. I also expected the veteran status of a Representative to prove itself both significant and important in producing high group scores. This was predicted to be observable for each group. Quite the opposite revealed itself to be true as the variable was insignificant for every group. In fact, while insignificant, many groups indicated that a Representative who had previously served in the military actually slightly contributed to lower group ratings.

Both the hypotheses surrounding the number of terms served by a Representative and the Legion of the district both proved incorrect. The number of terms, predicted to increase Legion scores, was found insignificant and in each instance showed that increased terms may decrease the overall score. Region, predicted to be insignificant due to the widespread nature of these groups, tended to be significant for all groups with the exception of the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Finally, hypotheses regarding the presence of defense employment and the presence of a military base within a district also proved incorrect. Substantial defense employment was insignificant for every group in all three tests. The presence of a military base also did not prove itself significant for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans' Association who had been expected to see some portion of their successes come from this variable. The presence of a base did however remain significant for the Retired Enlisted Association. This group seemed to benefit at least somewhat from the presence of a military base within a district.

Limitations

Chief among this project's limitations is the absence of a variable pertaining to campaign contributions or donations. It seems logical that this variable would have played a significant role in the successes exhibited by veterans' interest groups. However, obtaining information regarding donations by groups per congressional district proved itself to be a near impossible task. Because membership fees, donations, and contributions are often taken in at the local level and then redistributed by the national organization, no measure for this factor was found.

Little has been written examining the influence of veterans' interest groups. A significant body of research in this area may have provided valuable insights into which additional factors might affect the legislative successes of these groups. The low R^2 demonstrated by some of the groups might have been made considerably higher if more variables had been considered.

Additionally, there is currently some debate about the legitimacy of using ratings as a measure of ideology. Some argue that using ratings in this way displays a bimodality of ideology that is not actually present. This has the potential to cause some discrepancies concerning the ideology variable, however, as no alternative was available, the ratings were a necessary part of the model.

Finally, not all legislative ratings are created equal, and while for the most part those ratings created by our five groups appear to be both sound and reliable, groups tend to be rather quiet on explaining how their individual ratings are compiled. The more roll-call votes an organization chooses to include in its ratings, the more likely we are to see increased variation among scores. Some of the groups included had significantly smaller legislative agendas, thus creating less variation in ratings.

The Need for a Deeper Understanding

Perhaps, more than anything else, this research reveals the necessity for further investigation into the topic of those factors influencing veterans' interest organizations. Whether or not it was the intention of those who passed the G.I. Bill of Rights, that piece of legislation has come to symbolize a promise that the nation and the government made to its service people. Veterans' interest groups hold the charge of watching over this promise, and assuring that it is never broken. By more precisely defining those factors that contribute to the success of these groups, researchers may eventually be able to use those factors to determine which group has the greatest potential for ensuring veterans' benefits.

Furthermore, future scholars could use the variables featured in this model to continue investigating whether it is constituent desires or legislator ideology that motivate voting behavior. A significant body of work, revealing those factors that contribute to ratings from a collection of America's foremost interest organizations may provide a considerable insight into this topic.

Conclusions

The results found in this piece seem to significantly contradict much of what has been assumed about veterans' interest groups. Most dramatic of these findings is the behavior of the American Legion. The group, traditionally known for its adherence to conservatism, seems to award higher scores to Democratic Representatives with liberal ideology than Republican Representatives with conservative ideology. Similarly, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the group with the strongest ties to liberal ideology, showed significantly less liberal characteristics than other groups. These findings obviously point the necessity for more research into this area.

Understanding those factors that motivate voting on veterans' issues provides important tools, both for building a more effective veterans' lobby and for deepening our knowledge on congressional voting behavior. While little has been written addressing the former of these concerns, our current military involvements may soon require a better understanding of those who protect veterans' benefits. Speaking to the latter, the emergence of party and ideology as the primary motivators in this model coincides with the findings of recent scholars who have previously investigated those factors that contribute to voting behavior. Where this model is concerned, constituent characteristics and desires played a relatively small role in explaining legislative success. While, obviously this does not prove or disprove either the rational self-interest approach to voting behavior or the approach based on ideology, it does provide an instance of the latter outweighing the former.

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Appendix

In order to compile the dataset necessary for this model, a number of different sources were used.

Ratings information was obtained through the Project Vote Smart as well as the veterans' organizations themselves. Numerous conversations with Dean Stoleen, a staff member in the Legislative Action Department at the American Legion, were necessary to verify some Legion ratings. In addition, ratings for the Disabled American Veterans were received by request, though the organization's Legislative Action Center. This was done to confirm and verify Vote Smart ratings.

The ratings used to measure legislator ideology were accessed via the website of the American Conservative Union.

Information on district ideology, party affiliation, veteran status, defense employment, and the presence of a military base was obtained through the use of *CQ's Politics in America 2006: the 109th Congress*, as well as *CQ's Politics in America 2002: The 107th Congress*.

The measure for the percent of the district population that is either a member or the retired or active military was obtained through data from the 2000 U.S. Census, summery file 3.